



# THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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**LOBBYIST LUCAS HAMILTON**

Today, the Business and Labor Committee has the opportunity to support two commonsense bills to revise and update the Montana Landlord-Tenant Act. These are changes that have been a long time coming. I'm proud to stand before you today on the behalf of the students of the University of Montana in Missoula and encourage you to send this bill forward with a do pass recommendation.

I am a renter, but that shouldn't be surprising. I am just one of more than 12,000 students at the University of Montana, and unfortunately, there is only enough room for about 3,500 of us to live on campus. That leaves over 8,500 students (which alone would make the tenth most populous city in Montana) to find housing accommodations in the city.

Also like most college students, I live on a shoestring budget. Raising the money to afford the deposit on a rental unit takes time, and it's not the type of thing that your average student can afford to lose. But if a landlord or property manager wrongfully withholds a student's security deposit, money that the student might need in order to secure his or her next living arrangements, there is very little that we can do to stop them.

We can sue, it is true, but we can't always afford our own, private lawyer. Instead, we often rely on cheap or free legal counsel, like ASUM Legal Services at the University of Montana. Under current law, the only real penalty the landlord or property manager faces for wrongfully withholding our security deposits is that they might have to pay for our legal fees – a pittance in the scheme of things.

Without any real consequences, there is nothing to keep landlords and property managers from stepping over this ethical and legal threshold. We need this bill to create a disincentive that will make landlords and property managers think twice before conjuring up false claims against tenant's security deposits. I strongly encourage your support for this bill.

Lucas Hamilton

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## LOBBYIST LUCAS HAMILTON

Earlier, I spoke to you about the need for a disincentive to help protect students from wrongfully withheld security deposits. Now I come before you to ask for your support for a bill that will make further commonsense revisions to the Landlord-Tenant Act.

This time, you can help tenants across the state by ensuring that all rental units can maintain habitable temperatures. As I mentioned before, students, because of our sheer numbers, are a significant portion of the renting population in the state's college cities and towns. On occasion, we too have problems obtaining a copy of our leases from our landlords or property managers, and we may even have troubles keeping our homes away from home at a reasonable temperature.

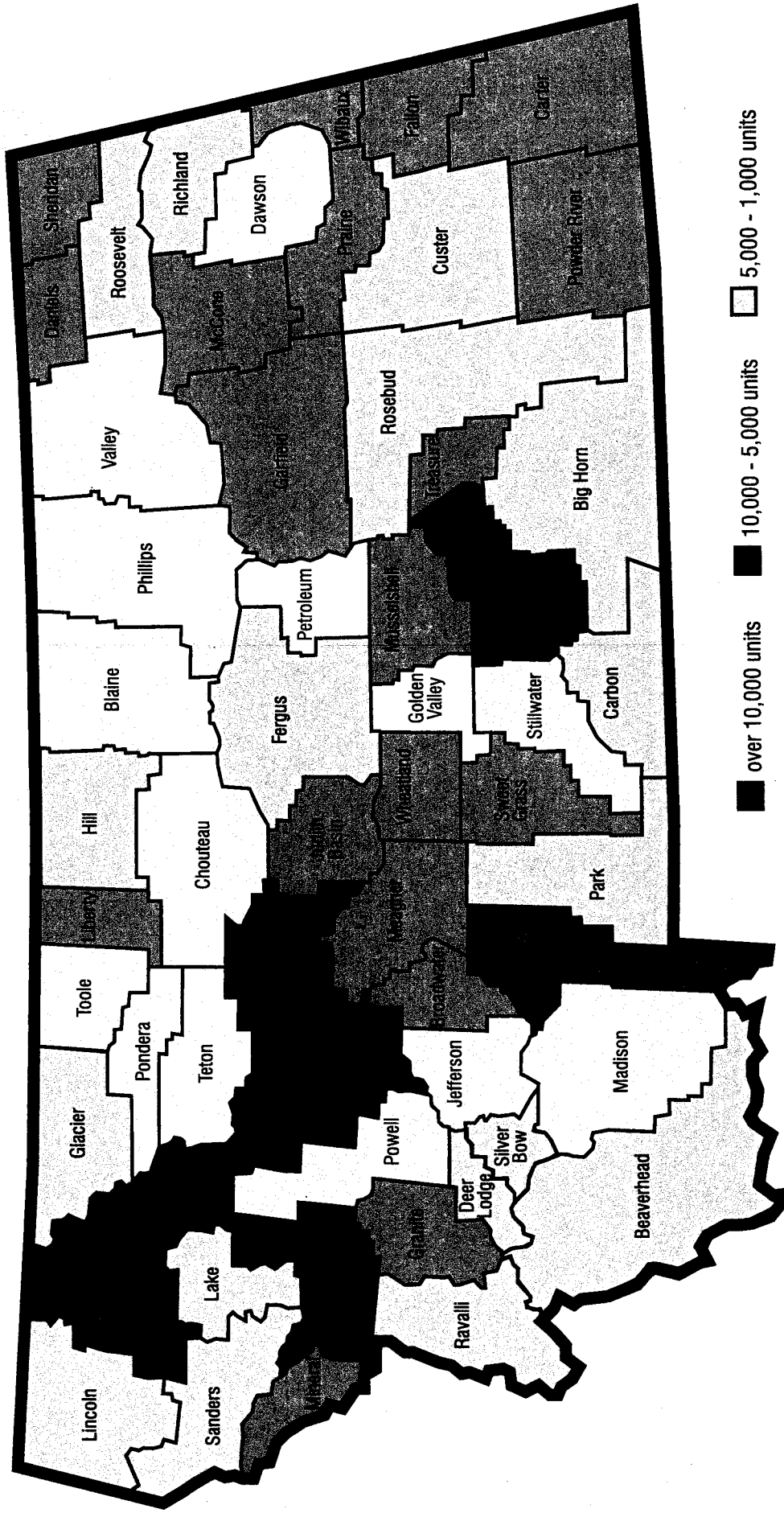
This bill will eliminate both of these problems for students and renters throughout Montana. There is no more direct way to get at the heart of two of the myriad issues renters and landlords commonly face in Montana. I encourage you to support this bill.

Lucas Hamilton

ASUM Lobbyist

EXHIBIT \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 HB \_\_\_\_\_

# MONTANA RENTERS: 246,000 STRONG



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, 2007 American Community Survey 3 Year Estimate